

Police Departments' Detention – Holding Facilities

2004-2005 Grand Jury Report

I. Reason for Investigation

The California Penal Code §919(b) mandates that the Grand Jury conduct an annual inspection of detention holding facilities.

II. Procedures

The Grand Jury reviewed existing conditions and reviewed problem areas that arose in previous Grand Jury reports. The Grand Jury interviewed the police chief or the chief's representative in each of the following cities:

- City of Benicia
- City of Dixon
- City of Fairfield
- City of Rio Vista
- City of Suisun City
- City of Vacaville
- City of Vallejo

III. Background

Benicia Police Department

This police department building is old and needs improvement in many areas. Benicia has two holding cells. One is large enough to hold a maximum of two people in custody and the second cell is approximately one and one-half the size of the first. There are no toilet facilities in or near the holding cells. Each holding cell is secured by a manual sliding lock. Cells are cleaned and sanitized once a week. There are two employee bathrooms in the building. One bathroom has no locks and is located down the hallway near the front and side exit doors. The one bathroom in the building with a lock is located adjacent to the receptionist office. Staff must escort those in custody to the employees' unsecured bathroom. Then staff must wait inside the bathroom with those in custody. After business hours there may or may not be sufficient staff to handle medical and/or physical needs of those in custody. There are no dedicated cells for juveniles. Benicia has no secured area (sally port) and no holding cells secure enough to protect staff or those in custody. There are no procedures in place to handle in-custody security problems or medical and physical emergencies. The average in-custody stay for prisoners is six hours. Benicia's holding cells are inadequate due to the location and size of the cells, lack of monitoring system, inadequate bathroom facilities and no electronic locks.

Finding #1 – Holding cells are not secure.

Recommendation #1 – Install locks that can only be unlocked by authorized staff.

Finding #2 – Bathroom facilities are inadequate.

Recommendation #2 – Dedicate a bathroom for those in custody with a lock that can be secured on the outside of the door. Install bathroom facilities in the larger cell.

Finding #3 – There are no dedicated cells for juveniles.

Recommendation #3 – Remodel the holding cells to create additional and separate cells for juveniles.

Finding #4 – Monitoring system is inadequate to ensure the safety of staff and those in custody during the hours of 5 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Recommendation #4 – Implement a monitoring system that will ensure the safety of the staff and those in-custody.

Dixon Police Department

The Dixon Police Department facility is 12 years old. There are three cells with individual toilet facilities. Prisoners are normally housed one per cell. A bench is used to secure additional prisoners. The booking area was clean and appeared to be safe. As noted in the 2003-2004 Grand Jury report, the City of Dixon is considering the population expansion issue and some facility enhancements could occur within the next 5-10 years.

Findings and Recommendations - None.

Fairfield Police Department

The Fairfield Police Department facility is under the command of a newly assigned Division Commander. There are three cells and two interview rooms in the booking area. For officer safety, the booking area has two panic buttons. The booking area was basically clean and appeared to be safe.

Finding #1 – During the Grand Jury visit, it was noted that some clothing items had been left on the floor in the booking area.

Recommendation #1 – Clothing items should not be left on the floor in the booking area and should be disposed of properly.

Finding #2 – The secured area (sally port) has been improved since the last Grand Jury visit when, according to the report, the secured area was used for vehicle maintenance and tools and supplies were scattered about. This year, part of the sally port was still being used to store bicycles and other items. At the time of the visit, it appeared that there was no other available storage area. Overall, the area was basically clean, and it appeared that it no longer presented an officer safety concern.

Recommendation #2 - A fenced storage area should be constructed immediately.

Rio Vista Police Department

The Rio Vista Police Department's (RVPD) pre-booking room was clean and appeared to be safe. Pursuant to departmental policy, the RVPD does not accept violent prisoners. They are transported directly to Solano County Jail. A secured bar mentioned in the 2003-2004 report has been removed. Currently, there are no holding cells on site. The City of Rio Vista is planning to build a new police department to accommodate projected growth in the city.

Finding #1 – Holding facilities are not included in new police department's plan.

Recommendation #1 –The 2004-2005 Grand Jury recommends holding cells be added to the existing facility and included in any future plans. A similar recommendation was made by previous Grand Juries.

Suisun City Police Department

The Suisun City Police Department's (SCPD) booking area was clean and appeared to be safe. The facility has temporary holding cells. Pursuant to department policy, the SCPD does not accept violent prisoners. They are transported directly to the Solano County Jail. The sally port area was clean and being utilized for its intended purpose.

Findings and Recommendations - None

Vacaville Police Department

The Vacaville Police Department's holding cells and booking area are small but adequate. Areas were clean and safe. There is a separate cell for juveniles. The Department does not have a sally port. However, a new police facility with a sally port is under construction with completion estimated in the summer of 2005.

Findings and Recommendations - None

Vallejo Police Department

The Vallejo Police Department has undergone extensive construction to improve its facility. Four new holding cells have been built. Electronic locks have been installed on all of the cell doors. A new sally port has been built that will improve security for the officers, as well as those in custody. A fence secures the sally port. Gun lockers have been installed. Newly installed cameras now monitor all activities within the sally port. Four cells are dedicated for adults and three cells are for juveniles. All cells are sanitized every day, and each cell is equipped with a bathroom. The average in-custody stay is three hours. Vallejo has made excellent improvements by constructing new holding cells with electronic locks and has upgraded the sally port to enhance the overall security of this facility. Vallejo's facility is outstanding in the area of safety, sanitation and compliance.

Findings and Recommendations - None

IV. Comments

The 2004-2005 Grand Jury commends the Vallejo Police Department for the great job it has done improving its detention facilities.

V. Affected Agencies

- City of Benicia Police Department
- City of Benicia City Manager
- City of Dixon Police Department
- City of Dixon City Manager
- City of Fairfield Police Department
- City of Fairfield City Manager

- City of Rio Vista Police Department
- City of Rio Vista City Manager
- City of Suisun City Police Department
- City of Suisun City – City Manager
- City of Vacaville Police Department
- City of Vacaville City Manager
- City of Vallejo Police Department
- City of Vallejo City Manager

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- California Department of Corrections